

Q-Notes

Leaders of the pack

...Page 8

Actor reveals his first three-way

...Page 18

The Carolinas' Most Comprehensive Gay & Lesbian Newspaper

Printed on Recycled Paper

FREE

North Carolina plans to search for unreported cases of AIDS

by David Jones
Q-Notes Staff

RALEIGH—North Carolina health officials are considering a plan to request that insurance companies report people who have AIDS to the state. Records of the state's Purchase of Care program are already being checked to identify cases of AIDS that have not been reported previously. The state also plans to audit hospital records across the state to find cases of unreported AIDS.

The Branch Head of the HIV/STD Branch of the state health department, Wayne Bobbitt, confirmed to *Q-Notes* that the state does check Purchase of Care records periodically to identify any names of people with AIDS that have not been reported. The program buys medications for some indigent people with HIV and other diseases.

He said that the state needed to identify all cases of AIDS because the law requires the state to contact them. Further, he stated that North Carolina is losing federal money for AIDS related care because of under-reporting of AIDS cases. The federal funding formula is based on the number of reported cases of AIDS.

Bobbitt said that the state had already conducted one hospital audit, at the Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, and found 150 cases of unreported AIDS. The state plans to

audit hospitals across the state as a result, he said.

When asked about insurance records, he said that the state was discussing now whether it could obtain information from insurance companies. A letter from state health director Ron Levine to insurance companies is reportedly being considered, requesting information on AIDS cases under the state's right to collect mortality data. No requests for information from insurance companies have been made at this time, according to Bobbitt.

These developments came to light during a *Q-Notes* investigation into complaints by the AIDS Service Agency (ASA), based in Raleigh, about some state partner notification activities. ASA has issued two "Warnings to Clients" in its newsletter, and sent a letter to all AIDS service organizations in the state reporting on what it says are cases of harassment, intimidation and clients being given misleading information about what information they must give the state.

A diagnosis of AIDS was made reportable in North Carolina in 1987. Since then, people with AIDS have also been required to either notify their sex or needle partners during the year prior to their test or diagnosis, or to provide the names of those partners to the state for notification. In 1989 a new regula-

Continued on page 35



GLPM hosted the SC Gay and Lesbian Pride March and Celebration on Saturday, April 16. Approximately 2,000 people turned out for the event. For a complete recap of the day's activities, see article on page 25.

Lesbian accused of abuse out on bond

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

LEXINGTON, NC—After spending two months in jail for allegedly sexually abusing her own baby daughter, Shirley Edwards was released during the week of March 13 on \$50,000 bond. In a circumstance labelled by Edward's attorney as "twisted," the child's maternal grandmother, Elaine Vanzant, posted the bond even though she is the person who sought to have the charges filed in the first place.

Edwards, 25, and her lover, Donna Madren, also charged with sexual abuse and free on bond, have contended throughout this ordeal that the charge is nothing more than the malicious revenge of a mother who can't accept the fact that her daughter is a lesbian.

But, Edwards says that her mother bailed her out now because "she's had a change of heart."

Still, Vanzant has not attempted to have the charge revoked and Edwards has not seen her two-year-old child since January 11, the day she and Madren, 34, were arrested. Since then, the baby has been living with Vanzant who was awarded temporary custody by a Davidson County judge against the advice of the Department of Social Services. Edwards will get to see her daughter on April 26 for an hour. "It's going to be very hard, having to let go of her again. That will be the worst part."

Edwards feels confident that she will regain custody of her child when Vanzant's ninety-day custody period ends. "I'll get her back; no problem." However, her attorney, Jeff Koenig, doesn't agree. "No. She's not

going to get her [daughter] back unless the D.A. [district attorney] decides to drop the case. They're not going to allow her to have custody as long as charges are pending."

A grand jury is expected to hear evidence in this case in early May, and based upon the outcome of their ruling, Edwards and Madren could be on trial by August. According to Koenig, there will be a trial unless the charges are dismissed. "The grand jury will definitely find probable cause to go to trial. They always do."

If either of the women was found guilty of felony sexual abuse, a maximum sentence of life in prison could be imposed.

Koenig believes that the D.A.'s case hinges on Lexington Police Detective Angie Price, whose testimony, he declares, is based on hearing a tape-recorded conversation between the girl and her babysitter. This is considered hearsay, the Charlotte-based attorney notes, and thus is not permissible in a trial.

But, he says he really has no qualms with the tape being played in the trial since it contains nothing more dramatic than the girl stating that she was once spanked by Madren for jumping on the furniture. Because of the weak case against the women, Koenig is hopeful that he can have the charge dropped for lack of evidence.

Edwards says that she and Madren are "hanging in there" through this difficult time and are doing their best to be a comfort to one another without any other support. "As far as the [Lexington] community is concerned, I haven't received any help from anybody that I've seen."

New Life case remanded

by Marcie Rollins
Special to Q-Notes

MATTHEWS, NC—At New Life MCC's request, the Matthews Zoning Board of Adjustments has consented to revoke the variance they allowed for the church in September of 1993. In a statement presented to the judge in the case, the Zoning Board of Adjustments admitted they did not follow their own procedures in notifying adjacent property owners due to outdated tax records and, therefore, a zoning variance allowed for New Life MCC was invalid. The church's attorneys suggested this course of action in order to prevent a judgment which would preclude New Life MCC from ever being allowed to use the property they have purchased in Matthews.

Much has happened while the case has been pending review. Improvements to the property on Lakeview Circle continue. A septic tank is being installed and a contractor has been obtained to make the necessary improvements to the building to bring it "up to code." Rev. Bob Darst continues to lead the church's services at the Unitarian Univer-

salist Church, and membership has grown since October. Local individuals and national groups have expressed support both in words and in money, including People for the American Way, Rick Wilds, owner of Scorpio and Chasers, and clergy from several denominations.

The church board will meet in the near term to decide whether to immediately repeat their request for a variance or wait for some time to pass, to let neighborhood tensions die down. In the interim, according to the zoning ordinance as it stands, up to 50 persons may use the facility without a variance when it has been brought "up to code."

A church spokesperson expressed weariness with the process but said, "I sincerely believe that six months after we start having services there will be no more excitement."



Rev. Bob Darst

Nominations sought for annual Q-Notes awards

CHARLOTTE—Nominations are currently being accepted for this year's *Q-Notes* OUT!Bound Award and Mark Drum Memorial Award, to be presented by *Q-Notes* in June. This year will be the third time the awards have been presented.

The Mark Drum Memorial Award is given to recognize an individual who has done outstanding and exceptional work in the HIV/AIDS-affected community.

Mark Drum was a *Q-Notes* staff writer

who chronicled his battle with the disease until his passing in May of 1991. We are honored to pay tribute to Mark and feel this award is our appreciation in action.

The *Q-Notes* OUT!Bound Award is presented to someone who has made a significant impact on the lesbian and gay community in North and/or South Carolina. This person will have made a viable change through activism, lobbying, and community service.

If you or your community service organi-

zation know a person who should be considered for either prize, please write to us. Include in your letter a brief personal profile of the individual; a description of their work and performance; and the reasons why their contribution has been exceptional.

We are aware that hundreds of people in the gay and lesbian community are committed every day to extinguishing disease; suffering; bigotry; bashing; and discrimination, so choosing these recipients will be a difficult

process.

The deadline for your submission is Sunday, May 15.

All applications will be given serious consideration by a nominating committee; finalists will be voted on by the entire staff.

Please make sure that you include your contact information, as we will be making further inquiry regarding finalists.

Send your submissions to *Q-Notes*, P.O. Box 221841, Charlotte, NC 28222.